

Water-logging in the City

Last week's torrential rain was a great leveller. It made sure, among other things, the capital city lost its precious little privilege of keeping above the great confluence of flood waters.

Whenever the flood waters subside, the vast bodies of accumulated stinky stagnant water will also make their way out leaving the city, especially its roads, in a pathetic state.

To our relief though, in an interview with The Daily Star recently, a top WASA official described water-logging as a solvable problem.

Private Investment in Health

A vast scope exists for private investment in the largely underdeveloped specialised medicare sector of the country.

The privately-run facilities with their list of roving specialists are basically generalised health service units, not to say anything of their highly commercialised and often notoriously unprofessional perfunctoriness.

For this precise reason, those who can afford treatment abroad go for it at the expense of the country's heard-earned foreign exchange.

A case in point is the newly established Tairunnessa Memorial Medical Centre (TMMC), the first-ever state of the art private heart hospital at Konia, Gazipur some 28 kms from Dhaka city.

Myanmar Hotting Up

Following the first stand-off over military junta's refusal to let Aung San Suu Kyi, the leader of the democracy movement in Myanmar, meet her party supporters outside Yangon there has been yet another attempt last week to infringe on the rights of this irrepressible lady.

A UN official looking to check into Suu Kyi's health and sanity and explore the possibility of a mediation between the two estranged parties has been refused entry into Myanmar.

A Zero-Sum Game

India's voice in South Asia is not being heard with any noticeable respect after her great nuclear feat. Even the great powers do not see for her any distinctive great power role in South Asia as evident from their even handed deal with the South Asian countries.

AS claimed by Indian leadership the primary aim of nuclear tests in May last was to improve its national security. Security is always a matter of perception and none can challenge the way the Indians perceived it.

India has, of late, been seriously worrying about the security environment in her neighbourhood which in the perception of the Indians deteriorated over recent times.

What India did not spell out but could have been objective behind her decision of going nuclear was her long standing desire for a seat in the UN Security Council.

Another unspelt objective could have been a wider recognition at least within South Asia — that India was a major power and ought to be viewed with awe and respect by her neighbours including Pakistan.

After three months of Pokhran II and Pakistan's Chagai Hills tests as well as gradual settling down of the dusts they kicked off in international arena a time has come to reckon how much of these objectives have been achieved by India.

Nuclear weapons never gives security to a country — not even to the mightiest of the nuclear powers. The country of US stature with her awe-inspiring nuclear arsenal does not have any known defence against another nuclear weapon if someone wishes to lob a device at her.

Nevertheless, the most crucial question from the point of view of the rest of the world is: Will

nuclear India now make a greater or faster socio-economic progress as a result of her nuclear tests? Far from achieving better security from her nuclearisation India continues to be mired in perpetual insecurities most of which emanate from within her territorial boundary — her grinding poverty, political chaos, divisive society and so on.

As regards UN permanent seat it looks nearly as distant as it was before the tests. Even if there were some positive indications earlier for considering India as a credible candidate, that prospect has evaporated immediately with her nuclear conduct.

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At the same time no South Asian country — let alone Pakistan — seems to recognise India's superiority. With Pakistan's nuclear tests the strategic advantage that India was looking for has been decidedly lost.

but her total silence or indifference to the natural demand to get to books the killers of her warrior husband remains inexplicably preponderant. Her stance, on the contrary, in Manzur's case is significant though preposterous.

The Trauma of Invetives

by Kazi Alauddin Ahmed

It is of no use to attribute the current inertia to past political induction. Instead there should be a more objective and introspective analytical examination of the whole issue...

OVER the past several days I have been ensnared with an intriguing thought. I have been asking myself if one respectable and responsible citizen of the country can threaten another citizen, equally, if not more, respectable and responsible, with taking the latter's life.

All I have said are true for an ordinary citizen. But when it relates to highly placed personalities in the Government machinery and those in the opposition leadership it is bound to evoke more serious concern.

Conversely, there are leaders too who are immune from such perverted overtures. They are the ones who nurse genuine sympathies for all those affected by the killings of their dear ones.

proved again how formidable they were. Even the trying magistrate of the court had to succumb to their violent pressure and to offer the accused a seat, not in the dock, but by his side on the rostrum.

Some would, rightly or wrongly or by pure hypothetical inferences, seek to find a strange linkage of all these events to the trial of Bangabandhu murder case. The depositions of over three scores prosecution witnesses were reportedly concluded.

With Rubel's predatory type of murder the whole police administration has fallen in to an abyssal quagmire feared to have gone beyond salvation. A major shake-up though appearing to have been of paramount necessity, the undercurrent of disaffection being pro-active, its practical implementation may remain an uncertainty.

Let us dive deep into the causes, not the effects and in that there must be total participation of legal experts, jurists, criminologists, teachers of jurisprudence, social scientists, psychologists, admit the current ranking civil and military officials, political leaders, judges of the high courts, theologians, medical professionals of high repute, elites etc.

Vajpayee Govt Gets a Breather

The present government in India may survive for some more time but the cracks of fragility will continue to haunt since the recalcitrant allies will continue to trouble it and the BJP at one stage may also feel that it can no longer appease them...

THE mood was upbeat in the ruling circles particularly in the dominant Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the multi-party coalition after the news came from southern state of Tamil Nadu that AIDMK party led by former chief minister in the state Ms Jayaram Jajalalitha has decided not to withdraw its support from the federal government at the moment.

Paradoxically, some allies of the ruling coalition have been putting pressure on the government almost from the beginning of the rule on different issues like berths for their party leaders in the ministry, demands for concessions to the state that these regional parties represent, and even unexpected leniency from federal government on corruption-related charges in exchange of the support.

Gloom descended on the ruling quarters for last few days when possibilities increased that the AIDMK would part from the coalition which means downfall of the Vajpayee government.

The result is that the government stays at the moment. But why has the AIDMK opted for not pulling down the government at this stage when this was very much on the cards? Does this development prolong the life of the Vajpayee government considerably? What would be the course of actions of the major opposition which were eyeing on formation of new government?

Obviously, the AIDMK does not like to take the responsibility of political instability much sooner than many had expected, although

Vajpayee government of which it is also a component turned a blind eye to some of its main demands. Ms Jajalalitha put forward the main demands to the federal government and all of them are complex in nature and difficult for the government to concede.

Arguably, any government caring for prudence and popularity cannot favour an ally on such issues which will boomerang on it at later stage. The Vajpayee government will immediately be dubbed as undereratic if it applies the relevant clauses of the constitution to dismiss the DMK government in Tamil Nadu; it has to take into consideration the views of other states when resolving a water issue and cannot be too soft on the corruption charges because this will put at stake the very morality of the Vajpayee government about which Mr Vajpayee himself boasts of.

There is no wonder that Vajpayee government has not accepted any of them while it is also keen to keep the support of AIDMK intact. Mr Vajpayee despatched defence minister George Fernandes to Ms Jajalalitha in a last-ditch effort to salvage the government and it worked. After all, the AIDMK has to bear the brunt of the responsibility if instability grips India so soon as the elections took place only early this year.

The ruling coalition has inherent contradictions and one of them is the secular character of some of the allies while the dominant BJP and more particularly some of its leaders like home minister LK Advani and human resources minister Murli Manohar Joshi are perceived as hardliners in the communal camp of the BJP. Some of the allies also do not see eye to eye with the government on the need for explosions of the nuclear device as some quarters feel they were done for the sake of the fragile government and also on hardline stance towards China and Pakistan.

Some smaller allies like the Akali Dal in Punjab and the Trinamul Congress in West Bengal are also putting pressure on the government which is spending much of its time in reconciliation efforts with the allies. The coalition is also not fully cohesive on some domestic issues for the dominant BJP is seen by some of them as seeking to pursue potentially divisive lines on communal issues although the coalition is supposed to implement the 'national agenda' approved by all allies. The government in India may survive for some more time but the cracks of fragility will continue to haunt it since the recalcitrant allies will continue to trouble it and the BJP at one stage may also feel that it can no longer appease them and the opposition feels that the time is more ripe for staking claim for power.



Zaglul Ahmed Chowdhury

MATTERS AROUND US

shows more concern about the water issue so that she is seen as fighting for the cause of her own state.

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OPINION

Do We Need Them?

The law and order situation of the country is prompting an otherwise silent person like myself to come forward with words of criticism, despair, frustration, hate and anger towards the law enforcers. Indeed, their alleged cozy relationship with criminals has turned them into, so to say, 'lawlessness enforcers'!

I would like to thank Dr. Quader His thought provoking article, 'Let Us Do It Now', published in The Daily Star on the 5th August was indeed very inspiring. He has rightly pointed out 'Education, training, religion and vows have had little impact upon them (the police). If so they are rather a malignant tumor on the body of a civil society. Let us remove each of them (tainted police personnel) to give the civil society a hope worthy of living'.

Of course, people may question how a civil society can function without the law enforcers. As an answer to that let me ask, when was the last time we saw the police enforce the law? In fact, nowadays the only time we see any police action is when any party in power wants to foil a political demonstration or hartal called by the party in opposition at the time.

The police have now become known to the public as protectors of criminals and something aloof from the hopes with which any sane society looks towards the protectors of law

and order. Rather it looks like they themselves have become the largest, most well equipped and most influential mafia force in this country!

Here is the justification of my call for abolition of the police force —

a) The police have totally failed to give any sense of security to the public (the same public whose taxes are used to pay their salaries)!

b) Instead of preventing crime, they are allegedly nurturing criminals and even participating in crime.

c) The presence of the police has made us become a complacent nation, happy to look on as a person is robbed in broad daylight (turning a deaf ear to calls for help) saying, 'Why should I get involved? This is a matter for the police'. It is not uncommon to see a crowd of people just standing and watching a robbery take place (or running in the opposite direction, lest the robbers scorch us with their glare). Then we happily continue with our daily chores without a twinge of guilt at having enjoyed the 'circus' of a robbery in front of us.

d) If the police (that we have) did not exist then we would be forced to fend for our own protection. Every individual would have to become involved in civil defence. The new sense of awareness would compel us to come to the aid of a fellow citizen in distress. The truth is that we have become a nation of sheep and any two-bit thug finds it easy pickings when there is no resistance in the society.

e) We are often reluctant to get involved in the fear that we will be harassed by the police during questioning. All too often the innocent person, not the criminal, is harassed so that (believably) an excuse can be found to let the real criminal go scot-free! (Of course, this has to be done; otherwise how will these criminals 'earn' money to pay 'salami' to the 'protectors'?)

f) In the rare occasion when the common people do manage to apprehend the criminals, the police step in as if to protect the criminals from a 'gono pituit'.

g) The police force consumes a huge portion of the national budget. Not only that, they are costly for businesses and common people who often have to pay 'tolls'. From the traffic police on the streets to the big bosses in their grand offices — everybody wants a slice of the cake!

h) From violent crime to petty crime, the police are contributing their part. They even contribute to the pollution and traffic jams. Polluting vehicles know that they can safely run on the streets even if they spew out thick black smoke or break simple traffic laws (e.g. travel on the wrong side of the road, stop at an undesignated spot causing a traffic jam, smash into an innocent vehicle and drive away — the list goes on and on!).

The points in favour of abolishing the police also go on and on, but I think we all know what I might have to say. So I will not take up much more space (although no paper could be accused of devoting too much space to exposing/criticizing the rot and cancer that has settled into our society).

I appeal to the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, and, above all, every law abiding citizen to come forward in a movement to abolish the police force and mobilize ourselves to create awareness to prevent crime and STOP THE ROT RIGHT NOW!

A very frustrated citizen